Secrets of the World War

By ANDRE TARDIEU

Captain of the French Army, French High Commissioner in America, Clemenceau's Right Hand Man at Conference at Versailles.

"I shared their life too closely to be able to judge them," says M. Tardieu, but he proceeds nevertheless to paint a vivid picture of the meetings of the "Big Three" in Paris in M. Clemenceau's dark and comfortless office in the ministry of war. Woodrow Wilson, sitting bolt upright in his armchair, was a didactic logician. Lloyd George, sitting close to the fireplace, clasping his knee in his hands, was dazzling with eloquence and wit. Clemenceau was weighty, roughhewn and insistent.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Big Three in Paris.

This was the heroic period of the conference; by reason both of the importance of the problems under discussion and of the extraordinary intensity of the effort put forth. From March 24 to May 7, the whole treaty was put into shape; territorial, financial, economic and colonial clauses alike. Every morning and every afternoon, the four met together, usually on the ground floor of the Hotel Bischoffsheim. In the garden an American "dough boy" stood sentry, wearing the insignia of the conference, which scales on a blue ground. At other times the meetings were held at the ministry of war in M. Clemenceau's dark and comfortless office. Habit had created its own laws. In the afternoon each man took the same seat he had occupied in the morning. Sir Maurice Hankey, secretary of the British war cabinet, and Professor Mantoux, heard interpreter to the French delegation, were the only others present. The plenipotentiaries and experts came only from time to time. The tone was conversational. Neither pomp nor noise. Signor Orlando spoke but little. Italy's interest in the conference was far too much confined to the question of Fiume, and her share in the debates was too limited as a result. It resolved itself into a three-cornered conversation between Wilson, Clemenceau and Lloyd George—an amazing contrast of the three most widely different natures that it is possible to conceive. Always sincere and straightforward, these interviews were at times almost tragic in their solemn simplicity and would then relax into something approaching gaiety when agreement was in sight. History will record with approval that even in the most difficult hours the "Four" always spoke the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

I shared their life too closely to be able to judge them. Who better than I knows their shortcomings? I have no taste to blame them; for I saw them give the very best of their great minds to their task, and what more can one ask? I have no right to praise them. I shall but try to redress, in as few words as may be, the wrong done by the outrageous pen of a subordinate and disgruntled employe. I shall brush aside the legend that one of these three men hoodwinked the others. In France it has been said that Clemenceau was the dupe of Wilson and of Lloyd George. In the United States that Wilson was the plaything of Lloyd George, and in England, Mr. Keynes has written that M. Clemenceau turned the trick alone. This childish and contradictory explanation, convenient to politicians, must be abandoned. The exaggerated honor or the insult which it implies to the three leaders must be repudiated. The truth is that from the first day to the last, with a deep desire to reach agreement the discussion proceeded foot by foot. I have already explained why.

The discussion between men whose national and individual temperaments were utterly opposed was naturally exceedingly keen. President Wilson discussed like a college professor criticising a thesis, sitting bolt upright in his armchair, inclining his head at times towards his advisers, developing his views with the abundant clearness of a dialectician. Mr. Lloyd George argued like a sharpshooter, with sudden bursts of cordial approval and equally frequent gusts of anger, with a wealth of brilliant imagination and glorious historical reminiscences clasping his knee in his hands, he sat near the fireplace, wrapped in the utmost indifference to technical arguments, irresistibly attracted to whatever for solutions, but dazzling with eloquence and wit, moved only by higher appeals to permanent bonds of friendship, and ever fearful of parliamentary consequences. As for M. Clemenceau, his part in the discussion was thoroughly typical and in very many instances his views prevailed. His arguments instead of being presented by deductive reasoning like those of Mr. Wilson or of exploding incidentally like those of Mr. Lloyd George—proceeded by assertions weighty, roughhewn and insistent, but clothed with gentle words that did him credit and refulgent with emotion which at times was overpowering. Mr. Keynes has had the face to find fault with him for seeking first of all to place France beyond the reach of German aggression. It is the criticism of a man who has understood nothing of the history of Europe during the last 50 years and whose insular egoism cannot grasp what invasion means.

This period of history is closed. Most of the men who dominated it are retired. This gives me the greater freedom to say that the lesson of the war was not lost upon them. That despite their deep differences of opinion they were animated by an all-powerful unity of purpose by a spirit of real understanding. "We entered here united," M. Clemenceau used to say, "we must leave here brothers." France and her spokesman did all they could to bring this about. They had a hard time of it. To give effect by common agreement to the essential bases of peace—restitution, reparation and guarantees—what toil and labor therein lay! Complete harmony crowned their work with success. It is easy to pretend that the policy of France was a "punic" policy; the mark of the beast is upon our devastated region, and tells on which side were the Carthaginians. It is easy to taunt President Wilson with having adapted his principle to the pressing demands of reality although as a matter of fact the were not his principles alone but the principles of all of us and no one of them was violated; the brand of sarcasm comes from those who in the solitary seclusion of their firesides build in their own mind an imaginary world from which living, suffering and achieving humanity is arbitrarily banished. It is easy to make capital out of Mr. Lloyd George's contradictions, of one has suffered more from them than France. But in justice it must be added that in the most serious those who knew how to talk to the British prime minister could always bring him back to fundamental principles. The infinite resources of his mind, his passionate love of success, led him to improvise arguments which did not always bear examination or were too exclusively pro-British. But a man who enjoyed his respect answered the bold suggestions of his quick brain with those permanent truths which he had momentarily deserted. He came back to them when the time arrived for final decision. These three men, for whom needless to say I have not the same personal feeling, forced upon me the same conviction about them all; the conviction that in their unheard of task they managed to maintain and make ever closer the bonds that bind our three countries, the breaking of which would spell disaster to civilization. They only did so with great difficulty. In their search for essential unanimity, they sometimes discovered that they neither knew one another well nor understood one another fully. Nevertheless they reached agreement, and reached it by open, straight and honest paths.' This, I assert, and I assert it because I was there and others who have said the contrary were not.

And then there were minor criticisms. Fault was found that the council of four had no official secretariat. In the first place, all its decisions were minutely recorded. In the second, bureaucratic papermongers nearly cost us the war. Later on, in 1920, they nearly compassed the "sabotage" of the peace. Thanks are due to those who discussed things freely without thought of protecting themselves and with a set of minutes! Fault has been found with the time spent in discussion. The conference of Paris began on January 12, 1919. The treaty was in the hands of the Germans on May 7. It was signed on June 28. There is no instance in history of a work of this magnitude accomplished so rapidly. The congress of Vienna lasted 15 months; the congress of Westphalia five years,—and in each case the task was less. If my personal experience of the negotiations has left any regret in my mind, it is that at times things were done too quickly. Fault has been found that, contrary to diplomatic tradition, the treaty of peace was built without the classic propylaeum of a preliminary treaty. Perhaps it would have been better if a summary treaty had followed close upon the armistice. But is what the French delegates had at first proposed. Circumstances made it impossible. These preliminaries could have been signed neither before February 15, when Mr. Wilson left for Washington and Mr. Lloyd George for London, nor during the absence of M. Clemenceau who was wounded by an assassin on the 21st. When everybody met again on March 15, the progress made by the commissions justified the hope that the work would soon be finished, as it was in fact six weeks later when the treaty was ready, and the idea of preliminaries was abandoned. It was also abandoned for two other reasons. The first was that a preliminary, that is to say, a provisional and incomplete peace would have encouraged the already active campaign for immediate demobilization which everybody realized was both necessary and dangerous. The second was that President Wilson, anxious to have only one draft and not two to submit to the United States senate and desiring also not to dissociate the ratification of the peace from the ratification of the league of nations, insistently urged the abandonment of preliminaries and the immediate preparation of the final treaty of peace. The ratification of the treaty by the United States senate was a matter of some delay and such keen appreciation to the European powers, that they did not even think of discussing on a question of procedure the formal desire of the president of the United States. That is why the preliminaries were abandoned and the final treaty prepared.

To Be Continued

Vigor Of Youth In A New Discovery

Science Produces a Vitalizer Superior to Famous Gland Treatment—Magic Power of a Bark From Africa.

Have you lost your vim, vigor and "pep"? Does life seem dull and work a grind? Don't worry, Science has discovered a new vitalizer superior even to the much discussed "goat gland" and "monkey gland" treatment.

The principal ingredient is an extract from the bark of an African tree. It is said to be the most amazing invigorator ever discovered. Combined with it are other tonic and vitalizing elements of proved worth. In most cases, the compound produces marked improvement in a day or two, and in a short time the quality is raised, the circulation improved and the glow of health is felt in every part.

The new vitalizer contains expensive chemicals, but manufacturing in enormous quantities has brought the cost within the reach of all. Furthermore, the laboratories producing this new vitalizer, which is called Re-Nu-Tabs, are so confident of its power that they offer it on the basis of "no results, no pay."

Any reader of this paper may test the new discovery without risk. Send no money, but just your name and address, to the Re-Nu Laboratories, 235 Gateway Station, Kansas City, Mo., and a full treatment of Re-Nu-Tabs will be mailed. Deposit $2 and postage with the postman on delivery. If not delighted by the results at the end of a week, notify the laboratories and your money will be refunded in full. Do not hesitate about accepting this test offer, as it is fully guaranteed.—Advt.